

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicants: Akihiko HIRANO et al.
Serial No.: Not yet assigned
Continuation of USSN 09/986,597
Filed: Even date herewith
For: **DECODING APPARATUS AND DECODING METHOD
(as amended)**
Group: 2651 (expected)
Examiner: Rocio Colon (expected)

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

January 22, 2004

Sir:

Prior to initial examination on the merits, please amend the above-identified application as follows:

Amendments to the Specification begin on page 2 of this paper.

Remarks/Arguments begin on page 4 of this paper.